United Nations A/65/485

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 October 2010
English
Original: Spanish

Sixty-fifth session
Agenda item 20
Sustainable development

Letter dated 1 October 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

From 13 to 15 September 2010, the city of Cordoba played host to an international seminar on the role of agricultural biodiversity in addressing hunger and climate change, jointly organized by the Spanish Government (Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs and Ministry of Science and Innovation) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The work undertaken by the participants at the seminar, who included government officials, members of the scientific community and representatives of non-governmental organizations and also of the United Nations system, including FAO and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, bore fruit in the adoption of the Cordoba Declaration on the role of agricultural biodiversity in addressing hunger and climate change.

The Declaration sets out a number of recommendations on ways of meeting the challenges associated with food security and climate change, involving the better use of agricultural biodiversity at the international level, with due regard for the important role to be played by agricultural biodiversity in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Accordingly, the Declaration identifies four groups of actions which could be undertaken to this end at the international level: first, placing agricultural biodiversity high on the political agenda; second, strengthening cooperation between international institutions and developing joint programmes and strategies; third, stepping up the application at the country level of the existing agreements on this topic; and fourth, increasing the support provided to small-scale food producers, in recognition of their work to safeguard agricultural biodiversity now and in the future.

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy, in Spanish and in English, of the Cordoba Declaration on the role of agricultural biodiversity in addressing hunger and climate change (see annex). I should be grateful if you would have it circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 20 of the sixty-fifth session.

(*Signed*) Juan Antonio **Yáñez-Barnuevo**

10-56635 (E) 061010 071010

Please recycle

Annex

[Original: English and Spanish]

The Cordoba Declaration, 2010

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY MUST BECOME AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY IN OUR EFFORTS TO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Designating 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity reflects the importance of safeguarding biodiversity and the essential contribution of biodiversity to human well being and development. It is imperative that this recognition is followed by a strong commitment to the biodiversity that feeds the world — agricultural biodiversity.

Agricultural biodiversity includes the crops, farm animals, aquatic organisms, forest trees, micro-organisms and invertebrates on which we depend for food and agricultural production and for essential ecosystem services. This biodiversity, vital for achieving food and nutrition security and to meeting the challenge of climate change, is being lost at an alarming rate.

As part of the International Seminar on the role of Agricultural Biodiversity in Addressing Hunger and Climate Change,[1] held in Córdoba, Spain, in September, 2010, organized as a contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity, experts from all over the world emphasized the central importance of agricultural biodiversity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This declaration was elaborated by the Spanish Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs and the Ministry of Science and Innovation, with inputs by experts from international organizations co-organizing the Seminar trying to reflect the very rich debate that took place.

The Challenges

Global food security continues to elude us. Over the last years, the numbers of hungry have increased, reaching 925 million today. The world's population is expected to reach over 9 billion before it plateaus in the middle of the century. Population growth and changing diets will require an increase of about 70% in food production and may be accompanied by increasing competition between food and non-food production around the world with the growing demand for biofuels.

[1] The Seminar was co-organised by the Spanish government (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs and Ministry of Science and Innovation), international organizations (FAO, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Convention on Biological Diversity and Bioversity International), local institutions (Diputación de Córdoba, University of Cordoba and Ayuntamiento de Córdoba), and Cátedra de Estudios sobre Hambre y Pobreza as host. It included an open debate with participants from developed and developing countries, as well as members of civil society, farmers' organizations, industry and consumers, at national and international level. The Seminar was opened by the Spanish Secretary of State of International Cooperation and closed by the Minister of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs.

Agricultural and food production is, and will increasingly be, adversely affected by climate change, especially in countries that are already climate-vulnerable with low incomes and high incidence of hunger and poverty. A decline of between 20% and 40% in overall potential agricultural productivity has been forecast in many developing countries if temperatures rise by more than 2°C.

As well as meeting the needs of a growing population and meeting the challenges of climate change, agriculture must become more sustainable. Ways of increasing production are needed that do not depend on the increasing use of land, water, energy and other resources or lead to further pollution. These challenges require new solutions and new ways of thinking.

Agricultural biodiversity: the way forward

The increased use of agricultural biodiversity will be essential to meet the challenges of achieving food security and of coping with climate change. More diverse production systems using new varieties and species will be needed to achieve the productivity increases, resilience and adaptability needed. Improving water storage and use efficiency, reducing fertilizer demand and improving resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses will all involve deployment of increased diversity and of new diversity, as will changing, more variable, or even entirely new production environments. Agricultural biodiversity, which has fulfilled these functions for small scale farmers over hundreds of years, will need to play a greater role improving the resilience of production systems. Small scale farmers, and their role in maintaining and using agricultural biodiversity, will be at the heart of meeting the challenges.

The paradox is that agricultural biodiversity is increasingly threatened and is being lost at a time when, not only is it increasingly needed, but also when there are greater opportunities to use it to benefit humankind than ever before.

Some shortcomings that could cause this situation include the lack of priority to agricultural biodiversity, the gap between international commitments, national implementation and funding, the lack of effective participation by those who are most affected, and the disconnection between intergovernmental action on agricultural biodiversity, climate change and food security.

The need for action

Actions are urgently needed to address the challenges of food security and climate change, and to end the unacceptable and continuing loss of biodiversity. These include:

1. ***Placing agricultural biodiversity at the centre of the political agenda.***

Agricultural biodiversity needs to become an absolute priority to face the challenges of food security and climate change. Its importance and value must be recognized by governments and policy decision-makers at all levels. Decisions are needed that will:

- Help halt the loss of diversity of cultivated plants, domestic farm animals and other diversity essential to food security

- Ensure delivery of agro-ecosystem services that contribute to health, nutrition, livelihoods and human well-being
- Include agricultural biodiversity as a key component of the "wealth of nations"
- Increase the proportion of overseas development assistance for agricultural biodiversity.

2. ***Strengthening collaboration between relevant international organizations and bodies and developing common international programmes and strategies on agricultural biodiversity.***

Realizing the full potential of agricultural biodiversity involves multilateral and multisectorial approaches and the development of closer linkages, especially between agricultural and environmental sectors. These should ensure coherence and synergies in the implementation of different agreements and instruments. We call for:

- The development of a United Nations common road map with verifiable targets and milestones, including strengthening and building linkages between relevant multilateral financial mechanisms
- The development and strengthening of multilateral solutions on access and benefit sharing through collaboration between the Conference on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)
- The adoption by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of a programme of work on agriculture which recognizes the importance of agricultural biodiversity and the development of synergies between UNFCCC mechanisms and agricultural biodiversity fora.

3. ***Speeding up implementation at national level of the provisions of existing international agreements and instruments related to agricultural biodiversity.***

To implement these, countries need to:

- Develop the laws and regulations that will give effect to their international commitments
- Develop and implement the strategies and programmes that will translate these instruments into national realities. International assistance will be needed
- Integrate agricultural biodiversity into national and local development plans and poverty reduction strategies
- Establish greater inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation especially between the environment and agriculture sectors, the private sector and civil society
- Give priority to research and training in agricultural biodiversity.

4. ***Improving support to small-scale food producers as developers and custodians of agricultural biodiversity now and in the future.***

Many provisions of international agreements, including those related to the on-farm management and *in-situ* conservation of agricultural biodiversity, can only be implemented at local level. There is an urgent need to find ways of prioritizing support to local agro-ecological approaches which recognize farmers' rights and the key role of women. The perspectives presented by the IAASTD can be beneficially reflected and applied in actions at the local level. We urge that:

- Small-scale food producers' livelihoods and social welfare be improved in order to allow them to continue their role as on-farm developers and curators of agricultural biodiversity
- Localized biodiversity-rich food systems are strengthened and associated local knowledge and skills are enhanced
- Participation in decision-making is improved, access to locally needed resources is secured and rights, including farmer's rights, are respected.